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Dedication of New Library
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THE LIBRARY: A TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED RESOURCE

The University of Rhode Island campus has changed so much ~~since the~~ in the past few years that I am continuously amazed on each of my visits at ~~the new buildings~~ ~~last time I was here that I find myself looking for landmarks that are~~ surrounding the old ~~landmarks~~ familiar landmarks.

~~familiar. This is a tribute to your long-range building program and a~~
reflection of the growth of the student body to more than 10,000 in recent years. I understand that your 1960-1970 plans call for the construction of new classrooms, laboratories and residence halls, and clearly the pace is such that in a very few years the library we are dedicating today will be a landmark itself, representing--to some of us--the year 1965.

Unfortunately, there has been in the past some tendency to regard libraries as just that--landmarks. Libraries are not museums, and they should not be treated as such. But most of us grew up in a world in which libraries were as much a part of our lives as our homes and our churches, and we have had a tendency to take them for granted. I want to talk to you a little about the neglect they have suffered, as a result of this attitude, and to outline some specific actions that have been--and must be--taken if the libraries of this great Nation are to perform--and perform more effectively--their proper role in a changing society.

All my life I have had the good fortune to have access to good books and libraries. In my hometown of Harmony the library is--to my personal knowledge--highly important in the community, gives good service and serves the schools which do not have their own libraries. The Harmony Library was

originally started by our volunteer fire department, with which I have been privileged to be associated for more than 30 years. All the members of the fire department have maintained an interest in the Harmony Library, and have watched it grow, over the years. I am sure that most of you have had similar happy associations with libraries since childhood.

We--you and I--are the heirs of an idea that swept this country early in this century and left the country dotted with libraries--the idea that the public library ought to be "a university for the people." I suppose all of us believe that the public library has this educational function, and just assume that it is being successful in discharging that role. It is this assumption that is dangerous, misleading and false--and increasingly so, as our civilization becomes increasingly complex.

Since ancient times, libraries have served civilized communities as storehouses of information. The importance of this function is obvious, and is not to be belittled, but over the years libraries have taken on new roles: they have become mediums of communication as a part of our educational structure. Today, one of their principal functions is to teach.

We think immediately of school libraries and their importance in general and professional education. But I am thinking in broader terms. The educational institution--school or college--must not only teach; it must point the student down the road to knowledge. With school behind us, our education has only begun. Here, then, is perhaps the main role of the library--to help us gain the education we need on our way through life.

In this effort the school library is joined by the public library. Together these facilitate our self-development, intelligent participation in public affairs, and our pursuit of special interests.

Now, just half-a-dozen years ago it was my pleasure--at the invitation of the American Library Association--to speak to many of the Nation's librarians at their annual meeting. I pointed out that these are times when every institution concerned with maintaining a free and informed citizenry is playing a critical part in this Nation's destiny. No institution in American life is playing a more critical part than our public libraries because these libraries are the mainstay of our communications structure. They are indispensable in this era of science and technology, of far-flung interests abroad, of times when every thinking person needs the information, the background, that only reading can give.

I also pointed out at that time that the library's part cannot be a passive one--that dynamic action is called for on the part of librarians, trustees and the friends of librarians--because the total needs of our people for education and information must be met--our future advancement rests on that.

I discovered that this need was not being met when--in the early 1950s--the plight of the Nation's public libraries was first brought to my attention. It seemed to me a severe indictment of our society that many people in this country--especially in the smaller towns and rural areas--had no libraries. It was appalling to me that one person in seven in this country--some 25 million people--had no access to a library for pleasure or enlightenment.

In 1956 I had the honor of introducing into the House of Representatives a bill--which after it became law was called the Library Services Act. It made seven-and-one-half million dollars of Federal money available annually to State and local governments to aid in the development of more adequate library services. As a direct result of this, within the next four years more than 30 million rural people received new or improved public library services.

I am happy to add that the Act was extended in 1960 and was amended in 1964 to extend its use into non-rural areas. It was amended again, due in part to my own efforts, and for the first time in fiscal year 1965 it provides Federal funds for construction. This construction is on a matching basis and local public library construction is already, I understand, shaping up to benefit some 10 million Americans at a total cost of about \$20 million, about one-third of which is Federal money. Here in Rhode Island, public libraries in Providence, Bristol, Portsmouth and Westerly are in line to benefit.

To those of you who have just raised some \$2 million for the construction of a library, I do not need to dwell on present-day construction expenses. Nor do I need to dwell on the cost of stocking empty library shelves at a time when more than 25,000 different titles are being published each year, and the cost of library books is almost \$7 a copy. Nor do I need to dwell on the complementary role of State, local and Federal financing of this tremendous task in the interest of benefitting all our citizenry. Land-grant colleges--such as this University--represent--I am told--the Nation's largest single source of trained and educated manpower. And they also represent--I know--one of our earlier American Federal and State cooperative efforts.

I do not wish to imply that all the problems of the public library system have been resolved. But at least now the libraries can make a greater contribution to many of our great problems of general concern, including two in which we all have a special interest: aging and juvenile delinquency.

As all of you know who have followed my record in the Congress over the past 14 years--or who read the excellent article in last Sunday's New York Times magazine, "This is the Age of the Aged" --I have long been concerned with one of the great paradoxes of the modern world--that medical and social problems have arisen directly out of our conquest of the infectious diseases and our increase in life span. We can expect a continued increase in those burdens that weigh so heavily on the aged--now some 18 million of our people: health problems, occupational difficulties, lower income, unsatisfactory living conditions, loneliness.

The National Library Association five or six years ago outlined its objectives in regard to the aged. It has spelled out in congressional testimony how the public library renders direct service to the elderly; supplies middle-age groups with literature on retirement plans, housing and income; coordinates interested civic groups and educational programs; and assists personnel who work with the aged through books, films and exhibits.

Another group especially needful of library services is the young at critical ages. I have seen young people come to public libraries in metropolitan sections, drawn by up-to-date material on the space age, sports, career opportunities. And I have seen this in districts where crime and violence beckon constantly to every child. Again, the National Library Association's libraries stand as one of our great bulwarks against the terrible waste of juvenile delinquency.

One final word about our public libraries: As Chairman of the House Subcommittee directly concerned with matters of health and education, I have had an opportunity over the years to assist in the providing of Federal funds under the Library Services and Construction Act. I am not content with its growth from \$7.5 million in 1956 to \$55 million in 1965. I believe it should be \$155 million, and I have repeatedly expressed this opinion. It is still my hope that a Senate-House conference may increase the amount of Federal funds in this program.

But I want to discuss another problem with you, very briefly. In my opinion it is as urgent a matter as the 89th Congress is likely to consider, and it involves library facilities--those in medical schools.

I have introduced a bill--H.R. 6002--to help us come to grips with a crisis in medical libraries that has developed within the past few decades without anyone being very much aware of it. While we have been busy building the world's finest research institutions and equipping them and providing them with well-trained scientists, we have allowed our medical libraries to decay. While we have increased the outflow of medical research achievements until every daily paper has a new medical accomplishment to report--while we have increased the number of scientific papers by the thousands--we have only added to the inefficiency of the poorly staffed, badly housed, neglected repositories of all this new knowledge. And new knowledge that is stored--and never used--is knowledge of no conceivable use to heal the sick, to comfort the ill, to improve the health of the American people.

The libraries themselves thus become impediments to the moving of medicine out of the laboratory, to the patient. We are swamped with an abundance of scientific information which we are not equipped to handle.

In summary, my bill--and a similar one introduced in the Senate by my colleague, Senator Hill-- calls for assistance in rehabilitating existing and constructing new medical libraries, assisting research and training in the field of library science, and supporting nonprofit biomedical publications. It is hoped that this will start to bring some order out of the present chaos and prevent future publications from becoming, in the words of a recent Presidential Commission, "an exercise in futility."

A large-scale National effort is going to be needed to redeem these medical libraries. No one agency can do the job--it will take the medical schools, the Federal and State Governments, and private foundations. For my part, I pledge my full support to try to achieve what needs to be done at the Federal level. I urge you to give your full support to this expenditure of Federal funds by urging passage of this legislation by every means at your disposal.

I believe that this shocking state of conditions in medical libraries came about in the same way that the Nation's public library system fell into difficulties. It came about because we took both of these resources for granted. I hope that we have learned a lesson, here, and will recognize once more that our libraries--like that freedom which they so well serve--can't be left to fend for themselves, but must be cherished and nourished, if they are to survive.